MARVEL

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012

EWING
CAMAGNI
BLEE

X-MEN RED

THEN.

AMENTH.
THE IVORY SPIRE.

CASTLE OF THE WHITE SWORD
AND HIS HUNDRED WARRIORS.

Genesis is coming.

And not as she has come before.

In times past, she came in the name of ***Arakko***--that held the rear and fought our *leavings.*

Centuries late, she arrived--with her great *armies,* resplendent in their *arrogance...*

...and my Hundred showed those honored guests our ***most gracious hospitality***--handing out steaming cups of ***their own traitorous blood.***

"And when she came *again*--in thrall to the ***Daemon-Helm,*** backed by the daemon hordes--***the result was the same.***

"But the helm is now the *staff...*"

...and the staff is not the helm.

Saturnyne plays her games on *many levels*--and *petty vengeance* is one of them. Any gift she gives has a *curse* upon it.

And in *Genesis'* hands...***the curse has come for us.***

It still seems *impossible*, General.

Possession is one thing--but to think that one born of Okkara would *choose* to ally with *Annih*--

NO.

Do not say the *word.*

Do not say the ***name.***

"The staff is not the helm. The power it holds is *insidious*--and its reach is *long.*

"It whispers and tempts. And given license, it ***claims.***

"To speak its name, with it so *close* to us, could give it claim on your ***own*** soul..."

Ha!

Not *my* soul, General.

Even *yours,* my oldest friend--though it's been pledged to me for millennia.

Though you were *first* to *fall*...***and first to rise...***

...Jon Ironfire.

My life came *from* you. My life is *for* you.

Say the word and I'll spend it *again*-- ***cleaving that stick of gold in two.***

You've died for me too often to count, Jon. I ask *more* of you now.

I ask you ***to survive.***

Take the sword. Bring word to *Arakko.*

Tell them all-- but especially the ***Seat of Loss...***

NO! Don't ask what I cannot give, General! ***I will not leave you!***

All of your battles are ***mine to fight--***

Not anymore.

I RELEASE YOU FROM YOUR OBLIGATION.

Oh.

I...

It's...

...it's like waking from a ***dream.***

You got *old,* Blue.

I have, have I? Well, now *you* get to see what that's like, my friend.

I've kept you alive as long as I *could*--but once I break my hold, it stays broken. No more healing at my hand... and if you die *again...*

General!

What news, Kanyia? Have you sighted her *army?*

No! ***NO!*** We saw them not--***until they dropped their cloak!***

Genesis is not coming, General--

"--GENESIS IS HERE!"

[00_mutants_of_X]
[00_the_world__X]

X-MEN RED

GENESIS IS HERE

The island of Arakko, before moving to Mars and renaming that planet, was once lost in another dimension for millennia. All that time, it was ruled over by Genesis -- at first defending it against the daemonic hordes, and then, when she donned the Annihilation helm of their enemies, alongside them. She lost control of Arakko in the war of the X of Swords in Otherworld and retreated with her husband, Apocalypse, and her children, the four horsemen, to the daemon realm of Amenth, which her people had finally escaped.

Meanwhile, the people of Arakko have begun to change. Finding themselves NOT at war for the first time in lifetimes, they have been introduced to a new way of living by Storm and the Brotherhood of Arakko. Even despite the tragic slaying of many of their people by the Eternal, Uranos, they are starting to consider how life during peacetime could be different...

[THE WHITE SWORD]

[STORM]

[SUNSPOT]

[FISHER KING]

[IRONFIRE]

[GENESIS]

[NOVA]

[KHORA OF THE BURNING HEART]

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[00_mutants_of_X]
[00_the_world__X]

[00_00….0]
[00_00…12]

Blades to the front! Shield the artillery!

We'll spill a moat of blood before they take these walls!

They *hid* from us! *Snuck* up on us like thieves!

Why such base tactics *now?* After centuries...?

I fear I know, Anika.

Before, we were an obstacle.

Now we are the prize.

AAAAHH!

A Summoner dead. I *mislike* that.

Who shall answer, brothers and sister?

Whose turn is it now?

You will have a *hundred feasts,* brother--each one ***ever-replenishing,*** once Mother's work is done.

The ***hunger*** is upon me...

When will that be? The Spire is all but ***impregnable--*** *and I am not disposed to wait.*

Then let me speed your way...

...an arrow for an arrow.

AARRHH!

Tarius...?

The...the *contagion...*

...it spreadsss...so q-quickly...

...sssee for yourssselfff.

Plague! Plague-weapons in the ranks!

Get the General! He gives life to us all--

NO!

You fool!

He stays inside! Protected by the Spire!

If the enemy reaches him, all is lost--

Not all, Captains.

Honor is not lost.

As it would be--if I let my troops suffer agonies for my own comfort.

General, no! Please, I beg of you...

I hear you, Rukos. And you've served me *well*--so I won't strike your two heads off for showing *fear*.

Let me *see* this contagion...

The plague of ***black ichors.*** A disease of Pestilence's own design.

It spreads with a *touch*...

HHSSSS...

...but *my* touch is stronger.

SSS!

BE HEALED.

So. The *General in Ivory* comes to the battle with ***bare hands.***

Where is your *namesake*, General?

Where is your **White Sword?**

A question for a question, Genesis.

Where is your **husband?**

The Traitor Queen shows her face!

Take her down!

You dare?

To fire upon the mistress of *all flame?* To *make war on War?*

Learn your lesson.

I ask *again.*

Where is the sword ***Purity*** that cleaves all in its way? Where is the blade imbued with the *deep magic?*

If you have it, *hold it high.* Even now--with all the power I have in my grip--you'd stand a *chance...*

A chance to what? To *hold you at bay?*

To *hide* in our Spire, forcing *you* to come to *us*-- ***as if we were cowards?***

Oh, Genesis. You *surely* know me better than that by *now.*

I'd never stoop to *your* tactics.

Your *insult* is noted, White *Nothing.*

But if insults are all you *have* now...

...then the time has finally come for you to acknowledge *my rule.* Arakko *calls you,* General.

And I will not take no for an answer.

"And so it was.

"The staff *whispered*... and, after a time, the White Sword *heeded the call.*

"And his Hundred bowed *with* him-- for they were in *his* thrall, as he was now in *hers.*

"All save ***one.*** The one he loved best.

"The one he *trusted*--with his ***life,*** his ***soul...***

"...and his ***sword.***

NOW.

ARAKKO.
THE RED LAGOON.

TEMPORARY HQ OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF ARAKKO.

"I rode for days.

"Through the blistered wreck of *Dryador* and on to *Blightspoke.*"

BACK OFFICE OF ROBERTO DA COSTA.

And *there*-- in that place of chaos where space is *thin* and *vulnerable*-- I held Blue's sword in my hand.

Purity is named so for a *reason*--it is an object reduced to ***pure essence of function.***

A sword that is, itself, ***the act of cutting.***

And with *that* keen edge... I carved a path between *realities.* And came here.

To ***you.***

Hrm.

Beto was right to bring this to the Brotherhood-- and the ***Night Seats.*** But it's bigger than we are.

I'd say it's for the *Great Ring,* Ororo...

Agreed, Fisher King.

We must convene at ***once***-- to discuss the threat and *plan our response*--

A *discussion?* Is ***that*** what I rode through hell for? *There's only* ***one response!***

Gather the troops!

He's not wrong. If we face ***Annihilation***--in *whatever* form-- time is of the essence.

No thrones on Arakko, Khora. No *generals* either.

We're a planet of *survivors* trying to *heal*-- not a hundred soldiers fighting under ***one iron fist...***

What do ***you*** know of the Hundred, old man? Or of *healing?*

I fell *dead* in our great healer's arms--and I was ***healed*** and ***healed*** and ***healed*** and woke *still young* in a fight *eons old*--to watch it ***lost!*** To watch ***him*** lost!

Where were you?

Not *there*, aye. But ***somewhere.*** And maybe I'll teach you how ***I*** fought.

If you want to test your *fancy weapons* against ***my bare hands--***

That will be ***ENOUGH!***

FWOOSH

We *all* have pain. We all have the right to *speak it aloud* and have it *heard.*

But it ***demeans*** that pain to reduce it to a ***contest.***

I expect better of *you,* Fisher...

He reminds me of ***me.*** Makes it hard to keep a temper.

Watching *him* get ready to make my *old mistakes...*

I... apologize.

Warriors at rest have still known war. ***Everyone*** in this room has been steeped in *despair and death...*

Well... *personally,* I wouldn't say ***steeped...***

You're a *little* steeped, Richard. You've at least been *dunked* once or twice.

Kind of a *death donut.*

A what?

But the fire-hearted one--***Khora?***--she's right. There's ***no time.***

Genesis has the ***Annihilation Staff*** in her hand and *darkness* in her heart, and she is ***coming.*** When she *arrives...*

"...it'll *already* be ***too late.***"

ARAKKO PRIME.

SHZRAK

There was *no* Krakoan Gate planted here. No life in this soil at all.

The entrails *said* you'd arrive at this place and time. But I wasn't expecting this *method.*

An *evolution* of mutant technology...?

The secrets of the ***Okkara Gate*** are mine to keep.

But it is as you said--*now and when we met last.* The living island Arakko is a *blasted plain,* barely alive and marked with the bones of our ***dead...***

...because ***I*** was not here to prevent it.

And are you *disappointed,* Queen Genesis?

I am *glad.*

It would have been terrible *indeed* if I had done what I have done on the strength of a ***lie.*** And more terrible for *you...*

I'd still *get what we both* want, your highness.

War.

You think you *want* a war with Arakko? Oh, *Marianna Stern*--that is almost ***precious.***

You have lit a flame that may ***consume this world***--does *Coven Akkaba* believe that fire won't ***spread?***

In *this*, your majesty...Coven Akkaba speaks for **ORCHIS.**

And we're counting on it.

ORCHIS MEMO

FROM THE DESK OF MARIANNA STERN

RE: PROTOCOL ORSON

Is that what we're calling it? I get the reference, but I don't like the idea that this will end up as just a hoax. We've worked too hard, me especially.

To follow up on my previous reports, the fuse is lit, as it were -- Genesis has arrived on Mars. By projecting astrally, I was able to communicate directly without fear of, well, being murdered -- a much easier feat this time than last, and we still need to discuss proper compensation for that. I know you have a scientist's skepticism when it comes to Coven Akkaba's methods, Director, but there are as many risks involved in projecting one's consciousness into the far realms as there are in preparing a gene-targeted pathogen or priming a Sentinel-sized ARC reactor or whatever you did today.

Still, that's a matter for our accountants -- back to the business at hand. I was a little surprised to note that only Genesis arrived at the prophesied hour (and the how of that remains a mystery -- she mentioned an "*Okkara Gate*", and I suggest you put a bio-research team on that possibility as soon as humanly possible.) So far, no sign of Apocalypse or their offspring. I'm not sure what that means, exactly -- perhaps we got lucky and she put a sword through his throat -- but their absence shouldn't affect the overall strategy.

There are two ways I can see the Martian gambit progressing from here. The first is that Genesis finds herself very impressed by Munroe's expert leadership. She completely understands why the living island of Arakko was yanked through space from an Earth it could easily have conquered and then put in a coma by a mad Eternal, and she's completely fine with fully half of the Arakkii population being scattered to the winds of space as mercenary trash when they could be united under her command.

That's one scenario. If it comes to pass, we've at least succeeded in distracting Arakko and Storm with internal politics while we [redacted].

The other scenario, of course, is the one we want.

Because if Genesis isn't impressed, that's a mutant civil war right on our doorstep. And we can do all *sorts* of things with that.

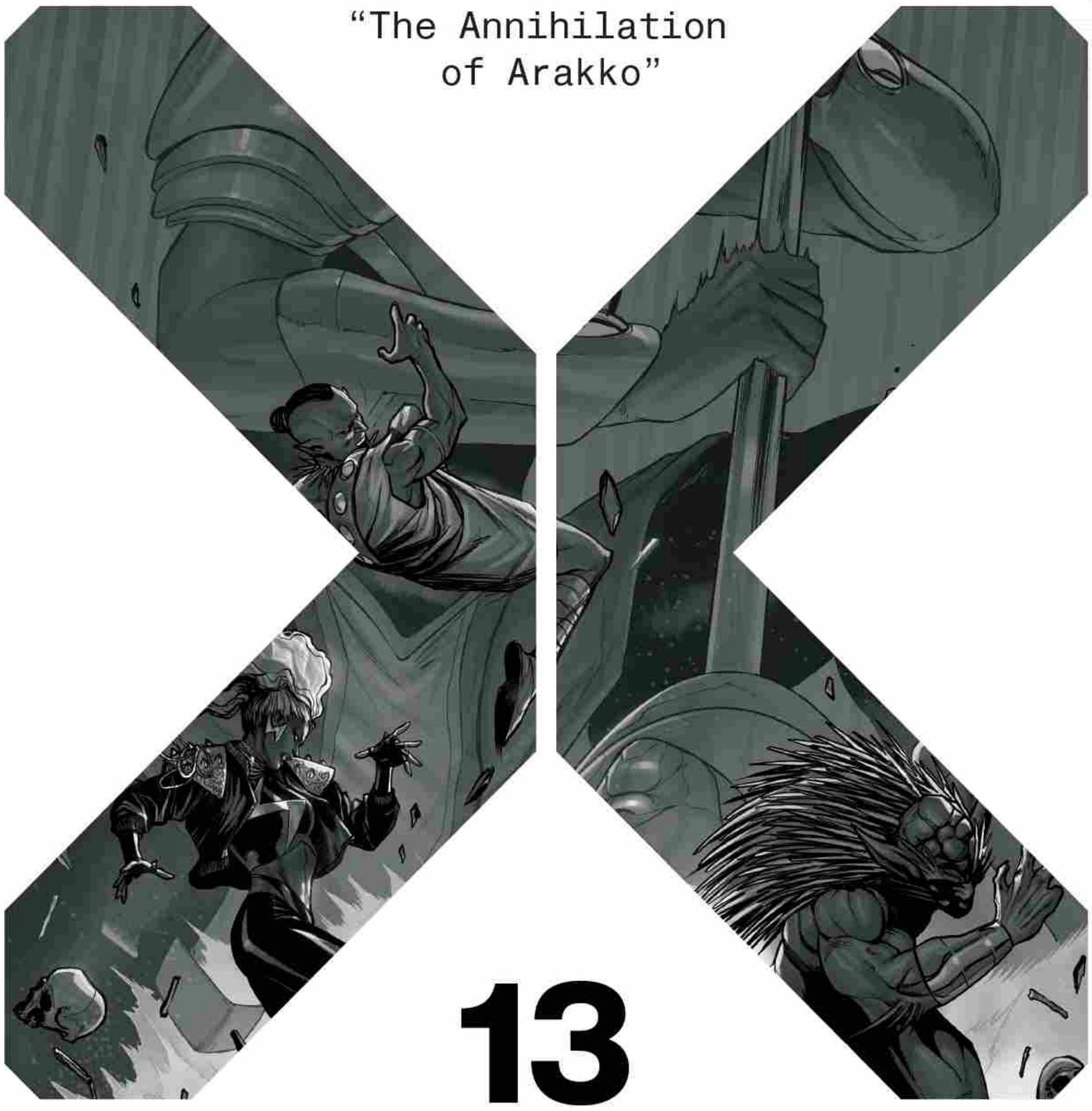
The New History of Arakko

Chapter MCXXVIII

Genesis was not impressed.

[x-men_red_[0.12]

NEXT



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ZONE